



Information and Map

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail in Griffith Park



Follow the route that changed history

While in the east, the thirteen colonies launched a war of independence from English rule, in the west, new settlers reached the end of an epic 1,200-mile journey. They were the families of the Anza Expedition, and their arrival would change California forever.

In the fall of 1775, a company of soldiers, their wives, and children left present-day Arizona under the command of Captain Juan Bautista de Anza. With more than 240 people and 1,000 head of livestock, they comprised Spain's first overland colonizing expedition into isolated Alta California. Their goal was to establish the empire's northern-most settlement at San Francisco Bay.

The young families' journey across deserts, rivers, and mountains was a risk, but they succeeded. In February 1776, the expedition reached el río de Los Angeles, camping near the site of today's Griffith Park.

Continuing north, Anza's party left a changed California in its wake. The settlers would establish San Francisco and San Jose, and lay the foundation of modern California.

Today, Griffith Park contains a premier segment of the 1,200-mile Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The 4-mile recreation trail in Griffith Park is one of the best places in the Los Angeles area to reflect on the legacy and impact of the historic Anza Expedition.

**Motivations and Hardships.** By 1775, the Spanish presence in Alta California consisted of two struggling *presidios* (forts) and five young mission communities. The crown's motivation

in sending settler families and livestock was to strengthen the colony and hold off English and Russian expansion.

The motivation of the expedition members, however, was more familiar: the hope for a better life. Anza had recruited the families from the present-day states of Sinaloa and Sonora, Mexico. The people represented many castes of the Spanish frontier—a mix of Native American, European, and African heritage. The expedition left Tubac on October 23, 1775. The 240 colonists left behind all that was familiar in exchange for several sets of

Spain turned to Lt. Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza to command its risky expedition. Son of a Basque soldier, he enlisted in the Spanish army in 1752 and advanced rapidly to the rank of Captain on the frontier at the Tubac Presidio. To gauge the prospects of a colonizing mission, he made a preliminary exploration of Alta California in 1774. Pleased with what he saw, he returned to Tubac to organize a full-fledged expedition with San Francisco Bay as his goal.

Colony of Alta California

Courtesy of NPS

clothing, livestock, and opportunity. More than half of the expedition members were children.

Since there were no roads, there were no wag- ons; pack mules and donkeys carried the band's six tons of food, tents, and implements. Altogether, the expedition made up a column that was a mile long and a quarter-mile wide.

The travelers faced blistering drought in the California desert and were pinned down for four days in the Santa Rosa Mountains shivering through sleet and snow. On Christmas Eve, 1775, they reached Mission San Gabriel where they rested for six weeks before resuming toward present-day Griffith Park.

**The Feliz Family.** Enlisted soldier Jose Vicente Feliz, his wife Maria, and their children were among the Anza Expedition families. Maria was one of eight women who were pregnant at the outset of the expedition. On their first night after leaving Tubac, tragedy struck the family. As expedition chaplain Father Pedro Font recorded in his journal,

Significant progress has been made since planning began and the Griffith Park Anza Trail project has received recognition.

- ◆ In 2012, it was included in President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Fifty-State Report as a grassroots conservation effort of significant value.
- ◆ In 2012, the National Park Service awarded Griffith Park its own Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail stamp for visitors.
- ◆ In 2013, the project received the recommendation of the Los Angeles River Cooperation Committee, a joint working group comprised of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and the City of Los Angeles in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers, which coordinates and evaluates projects along the upper reach of the Los Angeles River.
- ◆ In 2013, interpretive hikes that tell the story of the Anza Trail began being led by National Park Service Rangers and City of Los Angeles Park Rangers in conjunction with Friends of Griffith Park.



Holders of National Park Service Passports can get them stamped at the Griffith Park Visitor Center.



Planning for the trail is a cooperative effort of Friends of Griffith Park, the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.



The Anza Expedition was an enormous undertaking. By day, the column was a mile long and a quarter-mile wide. When it pitched camp for the evening, its sea of tents and cooking fires resembled a small town.

"In the night the wife of a soldier gave birth to a fine boy, but...the woman died in childbirth early in the morning." Maria was buried at Mission San Xavier del Bac. Feliz and his six children, including his newborn son, resumed their journey.

Eight months and 1,200 miles later, the families reached San Francisco and established a presidio. Jose Feliz remained there until 1781 when he was called to a special assignment: overseeing the establishment of a new town, *El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles*. He would become a key figure in the new settlement and, in 1787, was appointed *Comisionado* of Los Angeles—the pueblo's highest authority. In return for his services, Spain awarded Feliz 6,647 acres upstream from the pueblo. His holdings became known as Rancho Los Feliz and played an important part in the life of the town.

The Anza Trail in Griffith Park

The Anza Trail in Griffith Park



In 1990, Congress created the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail to honor the legacy of the 1775-76 Anza Expedition. The National Park Service administers the trail which includes the 1,200 mile expedition corridor from Nogales, Arizona to the San Francisco Bay area. As an important segment of this envisioned multi-use recreation trail, the Anza Trail in Griffith Park will closely follow the corridor in Los Angeles.

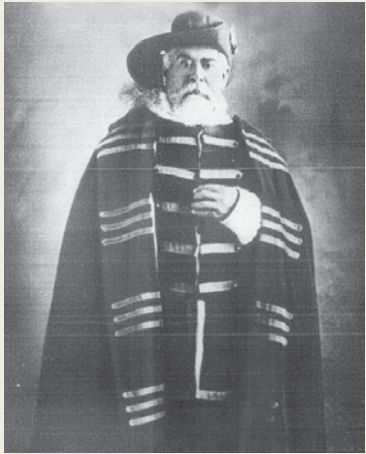
Since Fall 2011, Friends of Griffith Park has been involved in an initiative to identify and enhance Griffith Park's portion of the trail, serving as Project Cooperator for a primary planning team that includes the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.

Major project goals include adding interpretive signage, mitigating freeway noise, improving maintenance, promoting connectivity to the Los Angeles River, and increasing native vegetation to provide shade for trail users, as well as habitat for the species that use the trail as a corridor from the Park's uplands to its river.





In 1776, Los Angeles was a place of wild beauty. The Gabrielinos, its original inhabitants, lived in its foothills, canyons and plains. The knowledge they shared with the colonists of which paths to take and hazards to avoid, was invaluable to the expedition, and Anza ordered his soldiers to treat them with respect.



Born in 1849, Anastasio Maria Feliz is said to be one of the last inheritors of Rancho Los Feliz. Today his adobe is a part of the Griffith Park Ranger Station and Visitor Center complex.

A 2013 pilot hike with a National Park Service Interpretive Ranger is the first in a joint program to be conducted by City of Los Angeles and NPS Rangers.



Although urbanization has changed Griffith Park since 1776, much of the natural landscape Anza would have seen remains.



Mexican independence ended California's Spanish era, and U.S. statehood followed. In 1885, Colonel Griffith J. Griffith purchased the former rancho and in 1896 gave it to the city to create Griffith Park. By 1921, the old Feliz Adobe was slated for demolition, but concerned citizens rallied to save it, and today it is marked with a plaque honoring Jose Feliz for his pioneering role in Los Angeles, and Colonel Griffith for making the Park possible.

**The Trail in Griffith Park.** The Anza Trail in Griffith Park is a relatively flat, 4-mile trail. It runs the length of the park and reveals the change that European settlement brought upon California's natural and cultural landscape.



Just as the Anza Expedition families followed fresh waterways on their journey—for their own survival and for their livestock—the trail in Griffith Park runs parallel to the Los Angeles River. The trail connects directly to the river at several points, encouraging users to encounter it at close hand.

Remnants of oak woodland plant communities and views of Griffith Park's hills hint at the landscape encountered by the Anza Expedition in 1776. Elsewhere, the trail skirts modern picnic areas, a major golf course, and the epitome of present-day migration: the freeway.

The Feliz Adobe, a discrete City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, is an easy walk from the trail. It provides a tangible link to the Anza Expedition in the person of Corporal Jose Vicente Feliz whose rancho is now the Park. It is situated on the courtyard of the Griffith Park Ranger Station and Visitors Center, which offers exhibits about the Park and its attractions, picnic tables and restrooms.



Placed in 1996, this Anza Expedition commemorative marker is in the Pecan Grove Picnic Area alongside the trail.



One of the region's most natural stretches of the Los Angeles River is just steps from the trail.



Many of the wild creatures Anza encountered still dwell in the Park, which is the largest urban wilderness in Los Angeles.



The equestrian tradition thrives in Griffith Park, where trail hikers can encounter breeds that powered Anza's expedition.